AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of converting text to speech, said method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving an input word sequence in the form of text;

comparing said input word sequence with each one of a plurality of reference word sequence, said plurality of reference word sequences including ~~provided with~~prosodic phrase boundary information;

identifying one or more reference word sequences which most closely match said input word sequence; and

predicting prosodic phrase boundaries for a ~~synthesised~~synthesized spoken version of the input text on the basis of the prosodic phrase boundary information included with said one or more most closely matching reference word sequences.

2. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1 further comprising ~~the step of~~:

identifying clusters of words in the input ~~text~~word sequence which are unlikely to include prosodic phrase boundaries;

wherein:

said plurality of reference ~~sentences~~word sequences are further provided with information identifying such clusters of words therein; and

said comparison step comprises a plurality of per-cluster comparisons.

3. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 2 wherein said per-cluster comparison comprises quantifying the degree of similarity between the syntactic characteristics of the clusters.

4. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 2 wherein said per-cluster comparison comprises quantifying the degree of similarity between the syntactic characteristics of the words within the clusters.

5. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 2 wherein said per-cluster comparison comprises measuring the difference in the number of words in the clusters being compared.

6. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1 wherein said comparison comprises measuring the similarity in the positions of prosodic phrase boundaries previously predicted for the input ~~sentence~~word sequence and the positions of the prosodic phrase boundaries in the reference ~~sentences~~word sequences.

7. (Currently Amended) A text to speech conversion apparatus comprising:

a word sequence store storing a plurality of reference word sequence ~~which are provided with~~, said plurality of reference word sequences including prosodic phrase boundary information;

a program store storing a program;

a processor in communication with said program store and said word sequence store;

means for receiving an input word sequence in the form of text;

wherein said program is executable to control said processor to:

compare said input word sequence with each one of a plurality of said reference word sequences;

identify one or more reference word sequences which most closely match said input word sequence; and

derive prosodic phrase boundary information for the input text on the basis of the prosodic phrase boundary information included with said one or more most closely matching reference word sequences.

8. (Currently Amended) A text to speech conversion apparatus comprising:

receiving means arranged in operation to receive an input word sequence in the form of text;

a word sequence store storing a plurality of reference word sequences ~~which are provided with~~, said plurality of reference word sequences including prosodic phrase boundary information;

~~means arranged in operation to receive an input word sequence in the form of text;~~

comparison means arranged in operation to compare said input text with each one of a plurality of said reference word sequences;

identification means arranged in operation to identify one or more reference word sequences which most closely match said input word sequence; and

prosodic phrase boundary prediction means arranged in operation to predict prosodic phrase boundaries for the input text on the basis of the prosodic phrase boundary information included with said one or more most closely matching reference word sequences.

9. (Previously Presented) A program storage device readable by a computer, said device embodying computer readable code executable by the computer to perform method steps according to claim 1.

10. (Currently Amended) A signal embodying computer executable code for loading into a computer for the performance of ~~the~~a method according to claim 1.